



John Christopher "Smitty" Smith

MAY 14, 1960 - MAY 11, 2025



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John Christopher "Smitty" Smith

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John Christopher Smith, "Smitty", 64, of Comstock Park, Michigan, passed away peacefully on May 11, 2025, just three days before his 65th birthday. Born on May 14, 1960, in Saginaw Michigan to Robert and (Mary) Lois (Fox) Smith, John lived a life filled with passion, generosity, and unwavering faith.

John was known for his remarkable memory—he could recall names, faces, movie lines, and moments with vivid clarity. The youngest of six, his sisters adored him and would use flash cards to play school with him. He was reading by the age of three and at five would read the dictionary and encyclopedia for fun. As an elementary schooler, he amazed his brothers and sisters, they would challenge him to solve three digit by three-digit multiplication problems at the dinner table. He would give the answer just after they said the second number, before they could solve the problem on paper themselves, to find that he was always correct. He could also give the square root of any three-digit number without hesitation. Early on John's teachers wanted to move him up two grades but his parents decided to keep him with his friends the same age. As an early teen, since he was the youngest, he would help at his dad's building sites as what he referred to as 'dumb labor'. He often lamented that he did not learn as much about building from his father as his brothers did.

Growing up in Saginaw Township, John attended Hemmeter Elementary School, Chippewa Middle School, and Douglas MacArthur High School. After high school, he proudly attended the University of Michigan finding out that he really enjoyed the social life there more than his classes. Taking a term at Delta Community College, he then went to Michigan State, where with social life and classes intact, he graduated with a degree in Journalism and Broadcasting.

John's deep bass voice, and a spectacular memory for details and people made him well suited for music and news on the radio. He started his broadcasting career as a student at WILS at Michigan State, then after graduation he moved to Cadillac to work for WEVZ and WATT as the New Director. That gave him a chance to become close to his Cadillac cousins. A few years later he moved to Big Rapids, as the morning show jock, and then the News Director for WBRN. He



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became very fond of Big Rapids and Ferris State University, making it his own with many friends and activities. His deep voice caught the ear of the WOOD Radio Program Director as he drove through Big Rapids, bringing John to Grand Rapids to work mornings for WCUV, then moving to WOOD News Radio. He was recognized by the Michigan Association of Broadcasters with several awards while at WOOD. John diligently worked early on snowy days to manage the GRAIL network of area school closings for ten or so years. His last move was to Ferris to work in Advancement and Marketing as a News Services and Communication Specialist for almost ten years. He reconnected and was very happy working with all of his colleagues at Ferris and the many friends in Big Rapids. This gave him a special opportunity to share hours in the car during the commute with Izaak while he attended Ferris. He also was glad to not have to report on the recent and current political climate.

Baseball held a special place in John's heart, as a child he would listen to Earnie Harwell on a transistor radio under the covers after bedtime. A lifelong sports enthusiast, John was well known as the voice of Ferris State Football on the radio in the late 1980s to early 2000s, where his vibrant personality and deep knowledge of the game brought excitement to every broadcast. He also lent his voice to Ferris hockey games and served as an announcer at basketball and baseball games. On occasion, he would step in as an announcer for the West Michigan Whitecaps and the Griffins. He cherished visiting ballparks across the country when he could. He also enjoyed playing softball during his years in Big Rapids, where he lived for a quarter of his life.

In 1989 as the local talent for a Ferris Cable TV show, he met his wife, Mary Jo Hadley, or Jo as he called her, who was one of the show's guests. One of their favorite things to do was take walks on campus where he impressed her with his wit, charm, and humor. They married in August of 1991. He was a loving and proud husband and father, who enjoyed sharing his love of cartoons, classic TV shows, and movies with his son's Nathan and Izaak. He spent many joyful hours watching many classics with the family, telling them what and when the next great line was, word for word. Occasionally they would practice silly walks or lines from Monty Python or other favorites. He also was the boys' biggest fan in the stands as they played or ran for their sports. He especially liked running from point to point at Cross-Country meets to cheer them on. John loved music and shared favorites with the family in the car on trips or at home. He always knew which radio stations would come in at night from cities far away in different states, to listen to trivia, oldies, or radio theater shows. A fan of the familiar and the nostalgic, he had a soft spot for certain vehicles and could identify them from far off. John would team up with one of the boys to play family euchre games, to help them learn how to play. In the last family game, the boys won. John



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enjoyed camping with the family and went to BSA camp as an adult member of Troop 304 several times, where he enjoyed spending more time with his sons. He proudly returned to his role of 'dumb labor' working on both Nathan's and Izaak's Eagle Scout projects.

John gave generously of his time, volunteering as facilitator at Kids Food Basket for many years, an announcer at the Griffin's Great Skate, providing general labor for church activities, and announcer for the Riverbank Run in Grand Rapids as well as fulfilling many roles at his church. He was smart, witty, and outgoing, always ready to engage in conversation or lend a helping hand. He loved his community, and above all, his family, and friends. Nathan recalls learning service from Boy Scouts but says he learned it first from his dad and mom, and that he is only who he is today from all their lessons and love.

John had a dynamic personality and made lifelong friends his whole life. John embraced Facebook and thoroughly enjoyed connecting with many special friends from his past schools, workplaces, and community. He worked with a group of Saginaw Generals to help plan reunions with their cherished friends. Those reunions found everyone remembering so many stories with sentiment and laughter.

John lived his faith boldly and humbly, serving for many years at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Grand Rapids. He rarely missed Sunday service; served a term on the Vestry, was bookkeeper for about 20 years, sang bass in the choir for 33 years, served as the Stewardship chair for 23 years, helped with program set up and overnight host for Interfaith Hospitality Network (aka. Family Promise) about 20 years, visited many friends as a Eucharistic minister and performed Pilate in the Jesus Christ Super Star musical. His strong faith was his anchor, especially after his cancer diagnosis. After 13 years fighting cancer, with grace and courage, he faced the end of his life with the certainty that God was with him.

Left to cherish his memory are his beloved wife of 33.7 years, Mary Jo (Hadley); his sons, Nathaniel Smith (Sidney Jackfert) and Izaak Smith; his siblings, Robert Smith (Nean), Rick Smith (Laurie Ann), Becky Geidans (Val), and Jim Smith (Sue); his brother-in-law Doug Doughty; his sisters-in-law Ann Hadley (Lindsey Richardson), and JoAnn Shine (Michael), nieces, nephews, cousins, grand-nieces and grand-nephews who will miss his warm spirit.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Robert Erickson and (Mary) Lois (Fox) Smith, his infant twins, Cosmo Hadley and Harley Hadley Smith, his sister Laurie Grace Doughty, and his father



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and mother-in-law LeRoy and Florence Marie (Lesondak) Hadley.

John Christopher Smith lived a full and meaningful life. He was a man of character, joy, and deep connection—a loving husband, father, brother, uncle, and friend. He will be missed beyond measure and remembered with gratitude and love.

A memorial service and interment will be held at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Grand Rapids on Thursday, May 22, 2025, at 4:00 PM. Visitation preceding the service from 2:00 to 4:00 and a reception after the service for all friends and family.

In lieu of flowers if you feel compelled, please donate to Kids Food Basket, Grand Rapids, www.kidsfoodbasket.org



Events

John Christopher "Smitty" Smith

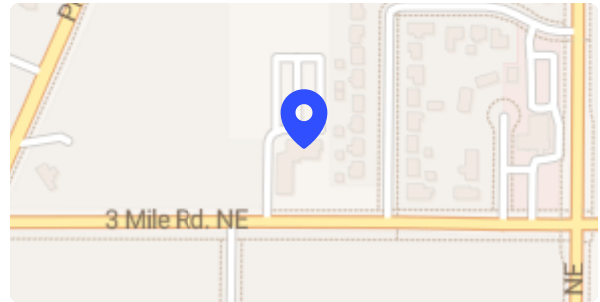
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Visitation

 **Thursday**, May 22, 2025


 2:00 PM - 4:00 PM ET

 **St. Andrew's Episcopal Church**
1025 3 Mile Rd. NE, Grand Rapids MI 49505

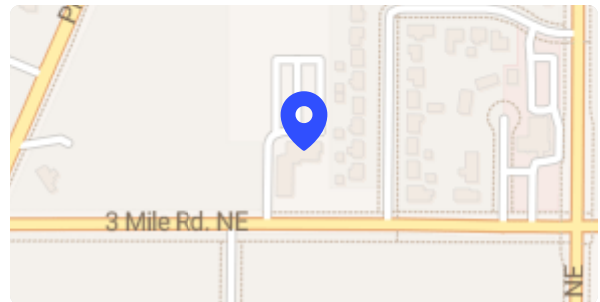


Memorial Service

 **Thursday**, May 22, 2025

 4:00 PM ET

 **St. Andrew's Episcopal Church**
1025 3 Mile Rd. NE, Grand Rapids MI 49505





Tribute Wall

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WR

William Rowe sent a Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum to the Smith family.

May 22 at 1:00 AM



WR

William Rowe planted a Memorial Tree in honor of John.

May 22 at 1:00 AM



PE

Patrick English Phd posted:

He was a great friend to all of us in the Ferris State Automotive Department. It was always good to see him when he came to visit, he visited us often and was always a force of positivity in our building. He will be greatly missed.

May 21 at 4:34 PM

CF

Chuck Drake, For Fsuea posted:

Mary Jo and Family, The Ferris State University Emeriti Associations sends its condolences for your loss of John Christopher Smith.

May 21 at 6:18 AM



Anonymous sent a Full Of Love Bouquet to the Smith family.

May 20 at 4:12 PM



Anonymous planted a Memorial Tree in honor of John.

May 20 at 4:12 PM





Tribute Wall

John Christopher "Smitty" Smith

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Anonymous sent an Arrive in Style to the Smith family.

May 20 at 12:25 PM



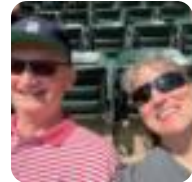
Anonymous planted a Memorial Tree in honor of John.

May 20 at 12:25 PM



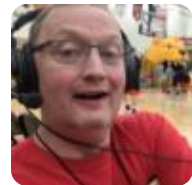
Mary Jo Smith shared a photo to the **Smitty** album.

May 20 at 6:45 AM



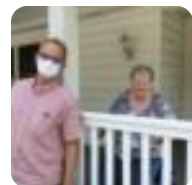
Mary Jo Smith shared a photo to the **Smitty** album.

May 20 at 6:43 AM



Mary Jo Smith shared a photo to the **Smitty** album.

May 20 at 6:42 AM



Mary Jo Smith shared a photo to the **Smitty** album.

May 20 at 6:39 AM





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Rob St. Mary posted:

When I was told John had past, I felt so sorry for his family - Mary Jo and his boys. My heart goes out to those who knew him - John C. Smith was an all-around great man.I got to know John working together in the WOOD newsroom. I was there from 2005-2008. One thing I learned was no matter what kind of day it was, and being in the newsroom could be a rough because you are drinking from a firehose of horrible stories on the regular, John always brought his professionalism and his humor.Being at WOOD we could be under extreme deadlines, seeking to get it right and get it out to people. I remember when we managed coverage of the blizzard of 2006 together - a storm that shut down Grand Rapids for about three days. We were live for about 18 hours straight the first day. This included John covering a massive multi-car pile north of the S-curve. The weather was horrible. The hours were long. But John was out there, doing his best, making sure the people of the community knew what was happening so they could make better choices. To be honest, that's all you can ask of a reporter. John excelled in this regard.Beyond the work, the John C. Smith I knew was always able to bring a laugh and share with others. I always appreciated his kindness. I remember little things like when he would bring his boys into the newsroom with donuts to share.Even though it was almost 20 years ago since those days, every few months I'd heard from John usually via Facebook chat. We'd pass messages back and forth, something on the TV that reminded us of our silly inside jokes from the newsroom.Once again, I send my love to Mary Jo, Nate and Izaak.- Rob St. Mary

May 19 at 12:11 PM



Lynn Lemin posted:

John was a wonderful friend. I will miss him.

May 19 at 7:51 AM



Bob Daniels/Ferris State Hockey Program sent an Enchanted Cottage to the Smith family.



May 19 at 7:48 AM



Bob Daniels/Ferris State Hockey Program planted a Memorial Tree in honor of John.



May 19 at 7:48 AM



Media

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Mary Jo Smith shared a photo to the **Smitty** album.

May 20 at 6:45 AM



Last Baseball game - Cubs Memorial Day 24



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Mary Jo Smith shared a photo to the **Smitty** album.

May 20 at 6:43 AM



Announcing FSU Basketball



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Mary Jo Smith shared a photo to the **Smitty** album.

May 20 at 6:42 AM



Visiting friends



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Mary Jo Smith shared a photo to the **Smitty** album.

May 20 at 6:39 AM



Smitty - High School



Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring John by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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